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OTHER HANDS

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EDITORIAL: THE END OF AN ERA

In 1993—in fact, in the very first issue of Other Hands—Iron Crown Enterprises announced the rebirth of its Middle-earth Role Playing line. The rule system and its support products were to undergo a thorough revision and expansion on a scale hitherto unheard of, resulting in the most extensive and detailed fantasy game setting on the market. Over the past five years, we have witnessed the gradual fulfillment of that promise—many readers of Other Hands have even contributed to it. While 2nd Edition MERP remains an unfinished project, I think all would agree that much has been achieved.

Regrettably, this chapter in the annals of Middle-earth gaming is now at an end. On September 19th of this year, ICE declared a moratorium on the MERP line as we know it. The viability of MERP has been in question for some time now, due to poor sales. Over the past four months, sales figures have dipped below the profit margin, with no indication of reviving. Accordingly, ICE has been forced to cancel all current MERP projects. Following the release of Hands of the Healer (which should be in stores by the time you read this editorial), ICE will be publishing no more MERP modules of the sort that we have grown accustomed to.

The reasons for the growing unmarketability of the MERP line are complex, but a few key factors may be identified with some confidence. Above all, there is the universal downward trend in the mass popularity of traditional fantasy role playing products (supplanted in part by the rising success of collectible card games): no matter how good a module may be, the audience is simply not large enough to sustain it. A second contributing factor is the perception of the game distributors responsible for getting the products onto the shelves: if they judge (rightly or wrongly) that a module will not sell well, too few copies of it will be purchased. Finally, there have been rising production costs to contend with (in particular, the sky-rocketing price of paper), which have resulted in prohibitive consumer prices for all but the diehard MERP completist. In the course of the past few MERP releases, ICE has attempted to meet these challenges through innovations in the format, content and size of its publications; but whatever the intrinsic value of these efforts, they have been too late to save the sinking ship.

But the news is not all bad. ICE does plan on continuing to release MERP products, but these will be much shorter in length (ca. 48 pages) and will be much less focused on world description in favor of ready-to-run adventures for pre-generated characters (in some respects, much more in

FINE PRINT

Other Hands is an international gaming journal devoted to fantasy role-playing set in J.R.R. Tolkien's secondary world of Middle-earth. It is a quarterly, nonprofit publication welcoming submissions dealing with any aspect of gaming in the context of Tolkien's -world: scenario ideas, rule suggestions, gaming product reviews, gamemastering aids, bibliographic resources, essays on Middle-earth, and whatever else our readership would like to see in print. In a word. Other Hands aims to be the definitive Tolkien-related gaming journal for a worldwide role-playing communitiy. Within the pages of Other Hands, the interested gamer may publish materials with reference to any game mechanics he or she chooses (including Rolemaster and Middle-earth Roleplaying). Such gaming material may deal with any time period of Tolkien's world, and need not be bound to what has already seen pring in Iron Crown's modules. Other Hands provides this freedom because it is a nonprofit publication. Subscription rates are as follows: inside the USA — 1 issue $3/4 issues $12; outside the USA — airmail, 1 issue $3.50/4 issues $18. Payment should be made to Chris Seeman: PO Box 1213 Novato, CA 94948, USA No Eurochecks, please!

Submissions are welcome in any from (preferably legible), but we prefer if you can to send a file. We use Word for Windows. If there is any question as to the readibility of you file, please save it in ASCII or text-only format and include a hard copy. All submissions must be sent to Chris Seeman: PO Box 1213, Novato, CA 94948 [USA]. Please write me or call if you have any difficulties. My phone number is [415] 892-9066. Please note also that I may be reached on-line at: **chris1224@aol.com**

the vein of ICE's Lord of the Rings Adventure Game series). The emphasis will be on products which place a premium on accessibility and zero preparation time.

ICE plans to release two such "adventure kits" in 1998, in addition to a crossover product linking MERP to MECCG (Elrond's House), an RMSS sourcebook for Middle-earth races and cultures, and the remaining two episodes in the LOR series (Before the Goblins and Greatest of the Forests).

More importantly, though, are ICE's plans for 1999. In that year, Miramax will be releasing a trilogy of Lord of the Rings movies (no doubt with the intention of rivaling the next Star Wars trilogy), and ICE hopes to take advantage of the heightened visibility (and, one would hope, popularity) generated by those films in order to launch a new role playing line for Middle-earth (which may or may not end up supplanting MERP). At the core of this projected line will be an entirely new rule system—not, as with MERP, a watered-down version of Rolemaster grafted onto Middle-earth, but rather one customized to convey the distinctive themes and atmosphere of Tolkien's world— supported by a quick succession of bimonthly adventure module releases (probably of the same scope and size as the MERP prototypes mentioned above). In short, ICE has hardly abandoned Middle-earth; on the contrary, it is about to get one step more ambitious.

What, then, is to become of all of the effort that MERP authors have invested in their respective projects over the past years that ICE will never publish? It is my hope (where the authors are willing) to publish these modules as supplements to Other Hands, complete with text-setting, artwork and maps that will fit with Pete Fenlon's classic 1" = 20 mile pieces. At present, I have a finished manuscript for The Inland Sea realm module, along with other possible candidates (not all of them yet completed) : The Grey Havens, Khand and Near Harad. I have received permission from ICE to proceed with this so long as it (like Other Hands) is a non-profit endeavor. Hopefully, I will know by the end of the year which authors will be interested in releasing their manuscripts.

Whew! That was a load of news and no mistake. And now, onto this issue of Other Hands. Our main feature for this issue is an article by Dirk Brandherm which explores the possibilities of developing a Middle-earth magic system off of Hârnmaster game mechanics. Like every attempt at translating literary representations of magic into gaming terms, Dirk concentrates on the problem of classification—how does one categorize the magic depicted in Tolkien's works and how do these divergent types relate to one another?

Next up is a creative essay by Deena McKinney on a rather practical topic for adventurers: how do they honor the fallen? This piece is followed by a brief overview by Brian Carlton of what the more recent volumes in the History of Middle-earth series have revealed to us concerning the genealogy of the Noldorin ruling house—again, very useful if one is running a campaign that deals with Elves. We wrap up our special offerings for this issue with the second installment of the campaign dramatization penned by Bridget Buxton last issue.

Next issue (celebrating the fifth anniversary of Other Hands) is just around the corner. I would like to include a directory of OH subscribers, so please let me know if you would prefer not to have your address appear. (The list will only be circulated among actual subscribers, and the information contained in it will not be released to any outside party.) According to my calculations, Other Hands currently has a total of 63 subscribers worldwide.

Maybe we'll pass the hundred mark sometime during the next five years....

Chris Seeman
October 10, 1997

BIBLIOGRAPHY ADDENDUM

P. Buchs "Middle Earth: the wizards - the representation of Tolkien's World in the game" in Peter Buchs and Thomas Honegger (eds) News from the Shire and beyond - Studies on Tolkien 1997

Enrico Clementel "Balie non si nasce...ma si diventa" Terra di Mezzo 5 (1997) pp. 86-90 [4th Age adventure] Nancy Martsch "Tolkien-inspired Games" Beyond Bree (August 1997) pp. 7-8

Nancy Martsch "Review of The Northern Waste" Beyond Bree (August 1997) p. 9

Riccardo Moretti "Miniature Tolkieniane da "Lo Hobbit" (Terza Parte)" Terra di Mezzo 5 (1997) pp. 79-80 [Review of Mithril figures]

P. Naef "Middle Earth: The collectible Card Game - Powerplay in the world of Tolkien" in Peter Buchs and Thomas Honegger (eds) News from the Shire and beyond - Studies on Tolkien 1997

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NEXT ISSUE

"FROM ENGLAND UNTO EGLAMAR"

COMMUNICATIONS

Nancy Martsch:

Regarding OH 18, "The Knight-wives"—more big-boobed male sex fantasies. At least they aren't naked. Capt. Rastarin is much better. Sometimes I am tempted to suggest the artist fight his next campaign in a large pointed steel codpiece....Oh well, it's just fantasy. (Why the misspelling of Sangahyando?) [CJS: the spelling was actually intentional: Sangahyandion = "Son of Sangahyando."]

I enjoyed the piece on horses. The subject of Elvish horsemanship was debated at length, breadth, depth, and nausea in Beyond Bree a few years back. Those interested in further research should check out *Beyond Bree* Sept '89 "Rochon Fëanorim (Noldor Cavalry)"; Dec '89 "Stirrups & Elves," etc; Feb '90 "Ride On!"; and "Saddle & Stirrups" May '97. The English Tolkien Society's *Mallorn* 29, Aug '92 had "Dressed to Kill" (Glorfindel's Horse) and a writer to one of the English publications noted that Tolkien learned to ride in the army (officers rode horses), and that his descriptions of cavalry tactics and the behavior of horses (getting lost, falling into rivers) are accurate.

I see no reason why Snowmane could not be of the *mearas* ("who would bear no one but the king of the Mark or his sons"). The Rohirrim did not habitually ride Elf-style. There might have been a waning among the *mearas* (BTW: the singular of *mearas* is *mearh*—see note 6 to "Cirion and Eorl," UT: 311. It's an Old English word.), as there was among Men of Númenórean descent: both Aragorn and Shadowfax seem to have been throwbacks.

Don't forget draft horses in your lists. And horses can have unexpected virtues as well, as the following true story illustrates.

My mother had a horse when she was a girl. It, and her friend's horse, were kept at a farm outside town. Mother's horse Maggie was big, docile, part Percheron or some such; a perfect horse for a girl. The friend's horse—let's call it Equis—was a former circus animal, white and beautiful, but sold for its bad habit of stumbling. Mother was nervous about riding Equis for fear she would make a wrong move and it would start doing tricks (remember that war horses are trained to do tricks). One day the girls decided to ride to town (which they weren't supposed to). They came galloping into town, showing all. When they hit the pavement, Equis went down directly in front of Maggie. To everyone's surprise, Maggie picked up her big feet and soared over the fallen horse and rider, clearing them with many feet to spare. Maggie could jump! No one was hurt. And for the moment, at least, Maggie was considered to have the most brains of the outfit. Anyway, this incident might provide some ideas for gamers.

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Jasna Martinovic:

I just want to let you know that I enjoyed OH 18. I loved the article on horses, it was just what I needed for my campaigns! I think that the Knight-wives article was good, and also very daring (RPG articles on female warriors so often turn into second rate Amazonian gibberish); it was indeed a pleasant read. I loved Rastarin's log, I hope to see more of it in the next issue! I liked the idea of having cover-art; still, I did not like that you changed the lettering on the first page. The previous font for Other Hands was, IMHO, much prettier, more subtle and exquisite. This one is too rough for my taste.

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FRONTLINES

Middle-earth Role Playing

- *Hands of the Healer* (#2026) is now available! [c. 144 pgs; $18.00]
- *Fornost is Burning!* This "adventure kit box," based upon a tournament presented at Gen Con, will be a quick-play campaign requiring no prep time by the GM. Excellent for role players who don't have as much time as they used to. The box will contain 1) a color map of Eriador (22" x 36"), 2) a scenario book (c. 48 pgs), primarily for GM reference and 3) a player book (c. 80 pgs), perfed and numbered so that it can be divided and stapled into a dozen or more player handouts. It is slated for release in July '98.
- A second adventure kit box (title TBA) is scheduled for release in December '98.

Lord of the Rings Adventure Game

- *Before the Goblins* (LOR adventure #4) is scheduled to begin editing this November. (No release date set yet.)
- *Greatest of the Forests* (LOR adventure #5) is scheduled to begin editing this December (No release date set yet.)
- *Lord of the Rings Adventure Game* will be rereleased, together with all five adventures, for Christmas '98.

Rolemaster

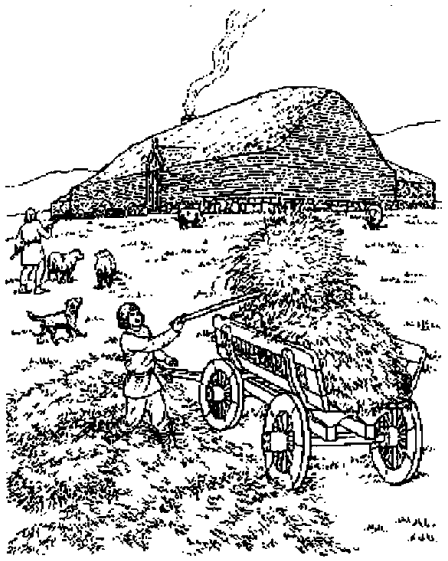
- *Races & Cultures: Middle-earth* (RMSS sourcebook) will present RMSS development stats for the Free Peoples of northwestern Middle-earth. Editing of the fined draft is scheduled to begin sometime in the spring of '98. No release date has been set. [c. 200 pgs]

Middle-earth Collectible Card Game

- *Against the Shadow* (MECCG expansion set) is now available!
- *The Lidless Eye Players Guide* (#3342) is slated for a late November/early December '97 release. ($12.00)
- *A Long-expected Party* (MECCG scenarios) is slated for a December '97 release. This supplement contains four scenarios set in Eriador. Like the MECCG scenarios provided in The Northern Waste, these involve new, unofficial sites and cards.
- *The White Hand* (MECCG expansion set) is slated for a January '98 release. Intended as an expansion for both *The Wizards and The Lidless Eye, The White Hand* enables you to take on the role of a fallen wizard.

Other

- *Elrond's House (FRP/CCG crossover* product) is slated for release in February '98. This 4-part adventure scenario is set immediately after the capture by Orcs of Celebrían (T.A. 2509). Each part or scenario is played as a board game using MECCG cards. Two stand-alone adventures are also included. Each player moves a playing piece representing his or her character around a board, drawing encounter cards from a random deck (of MECCG Resource and Hazard cards) placed face down. Hazard cards lead to hostile confrontations as per MECCG. Resource cards draw the character further onward toward solving the problem posed by the scenario and thus toward winning the game. The abilities of each character are represented by an MECCG character card accompanied by MECCG item and skill cards.
- Middle-earth Puzzles (500-1500 pieces) are slated for a November '97 release. The scenes depicted are as follows: Map of Middle-earth (Hartwig), Arwen's Choice (Nasmith), Feast at Rivendell (Howe), Éowyn & the Witch-king (McBride), An Unexpected Party (McBride), Mirror of Galadriel (Walsh), Praise Them with Great Praise (Home), The Way is Shut (Nasmith) and Fast Asleep (Giancola).



DIGITAL HANDS

Fredrik Ekman: Ryds Allé 3:106, S-584 35 Linköping, Sweden (ekman@lysator.liu.se)

In early 1996, the British company SCi released a game with the title Kingdom O' Magic (KOM). The game, an adventure in the modern point-and-click tradition, is nothing less than a parody of Tolkien's Middle-earth. It was designed by Fergus McNeill who became famous during the eighties for such games as Bored of the Rings *(influenced by, but not based on, the Harvard Lampoon book) and* The Boggit.

Probably because of its nondescript title, the game went by Tolkien fandom (myself included, until just recently) without notice, which helps to explain why this review appears now, rather than a year ago. KOM has been released for three different systems: MS-DOS, Macintosh and Sony Playstation. I have tested the MS-DOS version, which nearly resulted in this review becoming even longer overdue. The game conflicted with the sound driver of my Windows 95 installation and I could not even install the thing.

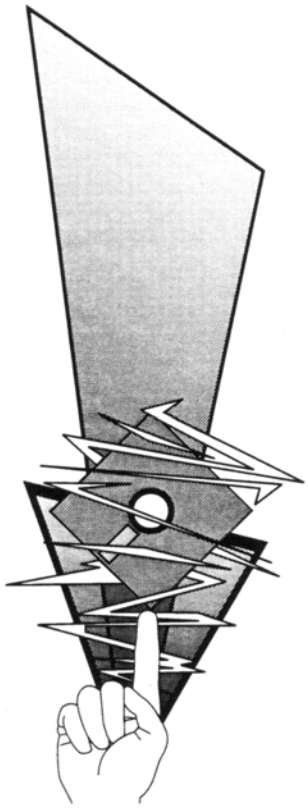
After having fought for weeks, I finally managed to find the correct driver and make the correct settings. A word of warning to Windows 95 users, thus: make sure that the game works on your system before you rush out and buy it.

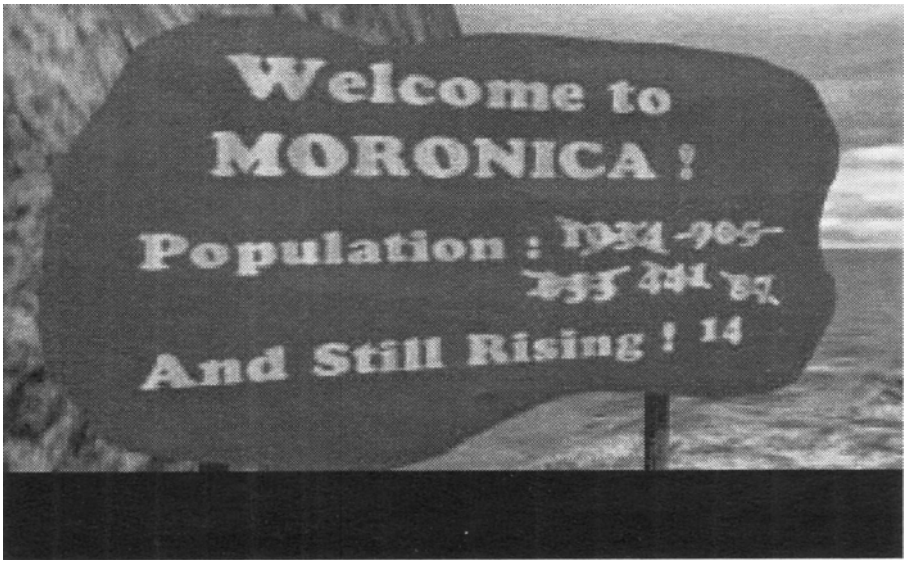
As for the game itself, you have a choice of two different protagonists and three different quests. Neither the protagonists—Thidney the Lizard and Shah-Ron the Girlie—nor the quests are pastiches on The Lord of the Rings.

The parody instead rests on the other characters of the game and their surroundings. For instance, we find such immortal legendary figures as The High Steward of Minar Tragedy, Don Elrondo of Rivendull and Queen Galadrag of DeLorean.

The game world feels quite alive with lots of characters moving around. There are frequent battles between karate Elves and Ringwraiths, for instance. You can talk with almost all the characters in the game—that is, those that do not attack on sight. Conversation is handled by allowing you one of three choices at different points in the conversation. Depending on what choice you make the conversation takes a new direction. This is rather much like the old 80s game Law of the West if anyone remembers that.

Battle is not one of the game's strong sides. While use of magic is OK of sorts, hand-to-hand combat tends to be kind of silly. You attack someone, you fight for a brief time and then he or she walks away as





if nothing had happened, perhaps even approaching you for a chat.

The humor of KOM is *very* British. I like it a lot, but I suppose this is a question of personal preference. As a matter of fact, the game stands out above all other works I have seen that parody Tolkien's books, including the somewhat infamous Bored of the Rings book.

Technically the game is excellent. Both sounds and animations run very smoothly on my Pentium 166. The animations in particular are a wonder to behold. Some are very beautiful. Just watching the Monty Python-style intro is almost worth the effort (if not the money) of buying and installing the thing.

The actor voices are good, although not excellent. In particular I feel that the voice of the narrator could be a little more...well... narrator-like, if you know what I mean. I would have wanted yet more British accent and yet more command and passion.

On the whole, I warmly recommend *Kingdom O' Magic* unless you strongly object to parodies of Professor Tolkien's books or do not like British humor (in which case you should reconsider and try it anyway). It is an excellent game in its genre. I have for a fact never played a better humorous point-and-click adventure. I have no idea how feasible it is to obtain the game outside the UK, but at worst, you should be able to order it directly from SCi.

Don't have time to write any more now. Gotta try and find that invitation to Don Elrondos.

SCI CONTACTING INFORMATION

- SCi Ltd. Unit 11, Ivory House, Plantation Wharf, Clove Hitch Quay, Battersay, London, SW11 3TN, England
- Official KOM web page (well worth a visit by itself):

http://www.sci.co.uk/kom/index/html

Middle-earth Role Playing and Hârnmaster: Thoughts on a Crossover

Dirk Brandherm: Am Fischhaus 10, 33397 Rietberg, Germany

To me the discussion in OH 14: 26-27 on the problem of how to translate the various "realms" of magic from MERP and Rolemaster into feasible Middle-earth equivalents once again would seem to indicate that the respective concepts keep causing no little trouble to gamemasters trying to create in their campaign a "feel" of magic consistent with Tolkien's writings.

So, while I do agree with Luke Potters view that with some more or less serious effort from the gamemaster you may achieve a fair degree of consistency here, I am not sure that I would call this the "beauty of the system." While such a versatility is nice to have in a generic fantasy role playing game like Rolemaster, it certainly is not what I expect from a game designated as being specifically "Middle-earth." Quite the contrary; in such a case I should expect game mechanics to be well-suited to the background of the game, not mechanics in which I first have to put considerable effort in order to tailor them to the needs of that specific background myself.

Despite having first used the MERP rules in my campaign for quite some time, later switching on to Rolemaster, to me this particular dissatisfaction proved sufficient reason for abandoning those trials as soon as I came across Hârnmaster, the mechanics of which I found far more in accordance with a Middle-earth setting. As I tested the new set of rules, my first impression was confirmed in almost all respects, and not only for those rules concerned with magic. Thus for once I took serious ICE's indication that the MERP source material was suitable for use with "most other mayor role-playing systems" as well, and abandoned my previous trials with MERP, Rolemaster, and its various companion volumes for good.

I soon found myself replacing the many combat charts and tables familiar from MERP and Rolemaster by the one single (if somewhat more complicated) Hârnmaster table, which suddenly allowed combat resolution in a more realistic, if often a more deadly, way. Soon also, Sea Law gave way to the Pilot's Almanac, which made you feel that salty breeze coming in from Belfalas Bay, and, most significantly here, the Tome of the Shek-Pvar now provided a subtle, even "realistic" kind of magic, way more appropriate to the needs of Gandalf and his like than the rules I had used before. Sure, those new rules also needed some modification to adapt them to the specific needs of a Middle-earth campaign, but these changes were comparatively minor in nature and much more rewarding; at least that's what I felt at the time.[1]

One of the first things I did when I adapted Hârnmaster to Middle-earth was to invent an indigenous vocabulary for the various "realms" of magic found in Hârnmaster, where magic is conceptualized around six different "elements," which a mage then may try to manipulate. As Chris Seeman rightly pointed out in OH 14:26, even MERP is lacking in specific Middle-earth names for its own concepts of magic, so quite apart from the problem of devising appropriate names in the particular case of adapting Hârnmaster terms to a Middle-earth environment, the following reflections might be of a more general interest.

THE SIX WAYS

First, Sindarin terms for the six relevant elements themselves had to be found, for which I choose: *gwelu* - air, *naur* - fire, *tinc* - metal, *cef*- earth, *nen* -water, and *fân* - aura. Then, names for the various disciplines or "ways" a mage may follow, each dedicated to a specific element, had to be devised.[2]

The choice of such a discipline as a personal way of understanding the nature of Eru's creation is fundamental to each magic-user, because access to spells from disciplines other than one's own usually will be quite limited. Also, it has to be stressed that those disciplines really vary in nature; very few spells exist in six different shapes, according to the elements, showing identical effects when put into use, which means that there is no whole array of bolts (e.g., ice, lightning or whatever) from which to choose according to your discipline, but ultimately all boiling down to pretty much the same results.

The **pad gwelu,** the "way of the air," is thus linked not only to the direct manipulation of this element, but also to ethereal phenomena and illusions in general.

The **pad naur,** the "way of fire," may serve to produce all kinds of pyrotechnic effects, but its more sophisticated spells also are concerned with the control of ethereal flames. Perhaps the *pad naur* can be viewed as the most violent discipline of magic, certainly the one which harbors the highest destructive potential.

The **pad tingril,** the "way of shining metal," is a very artifact-centered (one might even say "alchemical") approach to magic. This is the art in which first Mahtan and Fëanor, and later Celebrimbor and the Elven-smiths of Eregion, most excelled. By this art the Rings of Power were wrought, although in the making of the One Ring, a great deal of *naur,* as well as some bits and pieces from other disciplines, were involved. As the spells of the *pad tingril* deal with the handling of minerals in the widest sense, this also is the only discipline in which Dwarves feel comfortably at home.

Exercising the most immediate influence over animate nature, the **pad cuil,** the "way of life," or *padcef,* the "way of the earth," according to reading, perhaps should be viewed as the most ambiguous discipline of all. On the one hand, it lends to its practitioners great powers of healing over Kelvar and Olvar alike, so the effects of most Elven magic are brought about wandering the *pad cuil.* On the other hand, the *pad cuil* also might be followed with the dark purposes of necromancy in mind.

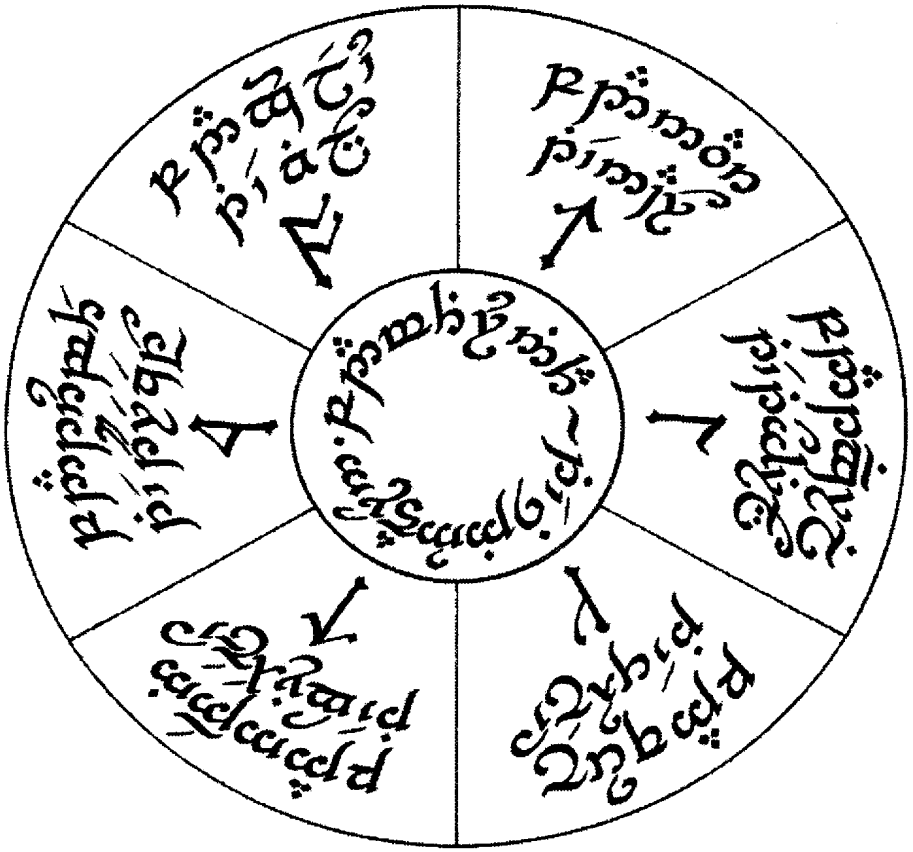
Apart from being concerned with the direct manipulation of water as a natural element, the spells of the **pad nendin,** the way of silent water, generally deal with dampness, darkness and slowness, diametrically opposed to those of the *pad naur,* but hardly less devastating in their potential effects.

Finally there is the **pad turbeth,** the "way of the powerful word," the most immaterial discipline of all, dealing with ideas, thoughts and spiritual concepts. In spite of its name, the spells of the *pad turbeth* are not to be mistaken for Words of Command, which are an entirely different thing, overriding the usual divisions between the disciplines, capable of exercising power over all six elements alike. Rather the *pad turbeth* is really the most subtle discipline of all, subtlety not being precisely an eminent feature of the Words of Command or peth gano.

Likewise not chained to any of the above disciplines, but certainly more accessible than Words of Command, are the spells of the *pad mithurinath,* the "way of grey mysteries," most of which simply influence the way spells from the other disciplines work, either neutralizing or reinforcing their effects. Some scholars, however, hold magic or lúthas to be an element in its own right, thus counting the *pad mithurinath* among the elemental disciplines as well, but this view, at least during the latter half of the Third Age, seems not to have earned universal recognition. Concerning this problem also see the fragments of Meneldil's treatise below.

For ease of reference, the table, on the other page, gives both the common Quenya and Sindarin names of the above described disciplines or ways of magic, together with their English translation.

QUENYA	SINDARIN	ENGLISH
tie vilyo	pad gwelu	way of the air
tie naro	pad naur	way of fire
tie tincorilyo	pad tingril	way of shining metal
tie cuileo	pad cuil/pad cef	way of life/way of the earth
tie morihelleo	pad nendin	way of silent water (Q. way of dark frost)
tie turequetto	pad turbeth	way of the powerful word
tie indinuldaron	pad mithurinath	way of grey mysteries



However, the concept of six distinct disciplines of magic, based on the manipulation of different elements, and showing their respective relations to each other, as well as to the common "grey" discipline of the pad mithurinath, is best illustrated by a wheel-shaped diagram, the usual way of representation in treatises of a magical or alchemical nature throughout the Third Age. The example reproduced here (fig. 1) is assumed to have been taken from the treatise "On Magic," written by the scholar Meneldil of Minas Ithil, who lived during the reign of King Eärnil II. In Tengwarin characters it gives the Quenya and Sindarin terms for each discipline, as well as the Cirth-initial for the Sindarin name of the corresponding element.

Meneldil's treatise carries no exact date, but obviously was written after the fall of Khazad-dûm (T.A. 1981), to which it refers as a recent event on various occasions, and certainly predates the sack of Minas Ithil (T.A. 2002), in which Meneldil was killed and most of his works perished along with him in the burning of the library. For this reason, only few fragments of his writings survive, but at least they do shed some light on the use of magic in the realm of Gondor at the time:

"Magic, it has been said, is the art of mastering the elements, but this only is half the truth, because verily, in order to make proper use of an element, you first have to construe it in your mind. In order to perceive its true nature, you have to understand its essence, as it was brought into being by the will of Ilúvatar, through the Song of Creation. And if a disciple does not listen well enough to the echo of the voices of the Ainur—an echo still resounding from each of the six elements alike, although from each in a different way—all too easily may he be deceived by the tune of Morgoth, and his mind be corrupted. So before a disciple may try to cast his first spell, for many years he will have to listen to the echo of the Song, and even before that, during many years he must learn to listen truly well. [...]

"And if a disciple's gift is great, and if he learns faster and seems to understand his element more readily than others, beware and take great care, lest insolent pride take possession of his heart, to lure him into trying and force the element to his own will. For this is not the right way, no matter what thine element, and working magic with contempt and insolent pride in thy heart means committing blasphemy by flouting the will of Ilúvatar. [...]

"Those, however, who call the results of magic a miracle sent from Aman do little justice to the disciple who has labored long and perchance has taken on great peril to work the spell; likewise they show little esteem for the Valar, who need no one else to do their will. [...]

"So, while none of the six ways may be easy to follow, the greatest effort of all is needed to master the grey path. And for this reason also I think that those who maintain the pad mithurinath to be a way just like the other disciplines, and lúthas to be an element just like gwelu, naur, tinc, cef, nen, and fân, perhaps only more difficult to understand, are mistaken. If they were correct, why then should only the other elements be opposed to each other the way they are, so that a disciple of the pad gwelu with some effort also may master spells from the pad turbeth as well as from the pad naur, even, if his gift is great enough, from those two disciplines closest to the pad cuil, dedicated to the understanding of tinc and nen, but never ever from the pad cuil itself. And so no disciple can ever work spells from a path directly opposed to his own element, but the pad mithurinath is open to all, even if very few indeed ever manage to understand the nature of the mithurinath itself. Also, no one may follow this most difficult path of all, without first mastering one of the other six elements, and I have not heard of any house of wisdom exclusively dedicated to this way.[3] [...]

"Thus it is that none of Ilúvatar's children or any creature of the Song may master all of the disciplines, so that among those who wandered the face of the Middle-earth since the changing of the world, only the Ithryn and the Enemy himself may command all of the elements, Nevertheless, even those are said to excel in one discipline more than in the others. So it is said thai Mithrandir is the true master of the pad gwelu, Pallando of the pad turbeth, Alatar of the pad nendin, Radagast of the pad cuil, and finally Curunír of the pad tingril. But none of the Ithryn ever mastered the pad naur like Gorthaur did,

and for this reason it is held by many to be more corrupting to a disciple's mind than the others. But of this I am not sure, as it may also be that from the beginning those minds most easily corrupted are drawn by this element more than by any of the others. [...]

Also, I do not believe that the colored robes of the Ithryn stand for the elements or their disciplines, because the colors of the elements we do know from their respective rings, where red is the color of Narya, while white is the color of Nenya, and blue is the color of Vilya, and also because the color of the pad mithurinath is grey, while grey, too, is the color of Mithrandir, whose element is not the mithurinath, but the gwelu.[4] *[...]*

"Whereas during the days of old the greatest masters of the pad tingril in Middle-earth could be found among the Noldor of Beleriand, today it is Aulës children who excel in this art more than others, even though with the fall ofMoria much of their craft has been lost. Some scholars now hold that the Naugrim of Hadhodrond dug and tunneled ever deeper not only in search of the true-silver, which can only be found there, beneath the summits ofCaradhras, Fauidhol and Celebil, but also that along the veins of this most precious of all metals a stronger source of naur could be felt than anywhere else on the face of the Middle-earth or below it since the waning of the Elder Days. And if it is true that this source greatly aided them in their mastering of tinc, and that it was because of this they surpassed any of their kin in those arts, what was the reason for their rise also would have brought about the downfall of Khazad-dûm, mightiest kingdom of their race. [...]"

While Meneldil's writings present a good guideline if you are willing to try and adapt the Hârnmaster magic rules to your Middle-earth campaign, always remember that what he wrote is not to be understood as set in stone; for although he certainly possessed a great knowledge of things magical, much of what he says is mere theory, and on several aspects he might have been wrong.

As a matter of fact, such an element-centered approach for magic in Middle-earth as described above might not find everybody's approval. But at least I consider it one way to explain the magical effects referred to by Tolkien in his writings more readily than by the realm-centered approach known from MERP and Rolemaster.

However, one of the most serious problems the MERP/Rolemaster-rules present in relation to magic is not really overcome by simply switching to Hârnmaster. Since in the world of Hârnmaster there are no Elves or similar race, neither do its rules offer concepts or mechanics to deal with the particular magic of the Eldar in a really convincing way. The pad cuil with its according spells is about the closest thing you will find there, but when trying to translate into game terms the magical songs of the Elves, I do not find this approach wholly satisfactory.

So, while I certainly can recommend Hârnmaster to everyone looking for a "realistic" set of role playing rules, inspired by actual life in medieval societies as well as by the original heroic mythology of Europe (whence in the end Tolkien received his inspiration), for this particular problem the reader might want to look for different solutions. Personally, to remedy this weak point, I have been experimenting with the SAGA magic-rules, which I found so versatile that recently I even started to give up completely using Hârnmaster for resolving magic in my campaign, but which unfortunately will only be of any immediate use to you, if you are sufficiently familiar with the German tongue, as currently there is no English translation available of this work.[5]

FOOTNOTES

1. As far as I understand, currently the Hârnmaster rules are under revision, which will give them a format somewhat more familiar to users of the latest edition of Rolemaster, the core rules appearing in a binder, with revised magic, naval and other more specific rules to be added in the near future.
2. The Sindarin and Quenya names used in this article are based on the index of Elvish terms found in *The Silmarillion* as well as on the Elvish glossary from ICE's *Middle-earth Campaign Guide*. Note that the English equivalents not always translate the full scope of the rather complex concepts brought to expression by the original Elvish terms.
3. Meneldil here employs the Sindarin term *bar-en-lúthas*, which may refer to the disciples of a certain "way" as a whole, but also can mean a specific order of mages, like the Nólehildi from ICE's Arnor: The People sourcebook. Especially during the second millenium of the Third Age, several such orders seem to have existed in Gondor as well as in Arnor and its successor-states. Probably they were founded after the example of the Heren Istarion, the order of the five Maia-wizards sent to Middle-earth by the Valar. Some of those orders even claim to have been founded directly by one of the Istari (e.g., the Nólehildi by Mithrandir); while this seems doubtful, some kind of patronage indeed cannot be ruled out. In all likelyhood, there never were more than a couple dozen of such orders, rarely with more than a handful of members each. For the later part of the Third Age we no longer have any indication of their existence, probably because first with the ruin of Osgiliath, then later with the fall of Arthedain and the sack of Minas Ithil their most important centers were destroyed. Likewise, no mention of an earlier date than ca. T.A. 1050 survives, even if some might try to view the Gwaith-i-Mírdain of the Second Age as a kind of predecessor for the later orders dedicated to the pad tingril. Due to the lack of surviving documents, also the presence of similar organizations already in Second Age Númenor cannot really be ruled out; however, at least Meneldil would seem to have had no knowledge of their existence.
4. While the three rings of the Elven kings seem to have possessed powers not exclusively related to their respective elements, they indeed provide one of the best indications that Tolkien himself might have thought of an elemental background for at least some of the magic he describes in his writings. As for the need to explain why there were only three such rings (while we really reckon with six different elements, using the Hârnmaster rules as a guideline), I choose to assume that Celebrimbor initially may have planned on making three more rings, but that, when he learned of Annatar's deceit, he of course would have abandoned the project.
5. For those interested nonetheless, this is the bibliographical reference for the SAGA magic rules: Jörg Hertwich & Stefan Stadtler-Ley: Zauberei, Magieregeln fur Rollenspiele (SAGA Reihe, Band 15) Zirndorf 1995: Gessnitzer & Stadtler Verlag (ISBN 3-925698-58-2).

Gondorian Funeral Customs

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Most every culture has a way to deal with death. For some people, the flesh has no meaning once the spirit has fled. For others, the body that remains after death requires special care to ensure the persistence of memory. This is an overview of funeral customs in Gondor; a brief story begins each step in the process, giving an illustration of culture and belief in action.

GUARDING THE BODY

Elbrith watched with heavy eyes and dead heart as a silken sheet settled across the body of her friend. Guarding the sodden mass that was once Melian Celebduriel, Elbrith leaned on a staff, motionless, waiting for the arrival of those who would care for her friend's body. And watching the blood seeping slowly through the cloth, the snow white silk brightening with color, Elbrith recalled with a flutter in her breast that the crimson stains matched those of the exquisite gown Melian wore the night they first met, at the Queen's Ball.

Whenever a person dies among the Dúnedain, a guardian must keep the corpse safe from any looters and defilers. The guard stands a post of honor at the body, wherever it may lie, until the embalmers claim it. In times of war, a commanding officer or any available family member will undertake the duty if at all possible. In times of peace, a close friend, brother or sister usually serves as guardian.

THE CLEANING AND EMBALMING OF THE BODY

Elbrith nodded silently to the two men in somber robes carrying away the body of her friend. They had traveled all the way from Minas Tirith to take Melian into their care, for she was to rest in the cold tombs of her family just north of the city. Slowly and deliberately, Elbrith knelt and wiped away as much of the bloodstains on the stone floor as she could. "The first time," she thought. "The first time in the cold north where we battled many foes, I saw my friend's blood spilled, and I felt sure it would be the last..."

The art of embalming is a respected profession in Gondor. The people of this land take the notion of enduring most seriously—if Death is Eru's gift to the mortal spirit, then so to shall mortal flesh endure it. The Embalmers Guild of Minas Tirith has representatives all over the kingdom. In case of more primitive circumstances or instances where an embalmer is not available, most Gondorians choose to cremate their dead to prevent any desecration to the body.

THE LYING IN STATE

The mourners passed by like a silent host, looking in wonder at the still corpse of Melian, beautiful in death as in life. Elbrith sat on a bench nearby, nodding respectfully as they swept past. Most of the people had familiar faces; some were from recent memory at Faelind's estate. Others looked different without their gleaming armor. Elbrith suppressed a giggle laced with need for wild release of emotion as she realized that more than one of these fine captains had a scar on his body from her now broken sword. Still others she saw reminded her of dark days in the city of Shrel Kain, where she had unwillingly served in the Gondorian army with Melian...

Gondorians consider it absolutely necessary for the living to have a chance to say farewell to their friends. Likewise, paying tribute to the deceased and his or her family is a mark of respect. Lying in state may often take several weeks to allow the friends and relatives to receive word and travel to the location of the funeral. Thus again the important role of the embalmer comes into play. Such times also allow, as shallow as it may seem, old acquaintances to be renewed and new bargains and deals and rumors to be struck and exchanged, particularly among the most powerful Gondorian families.

THE CEREMONY OF DEPARTURE

Faelind's face was as cold and grey as the stones in the walls as the crowd assembled in the main hall of his elegant home. Elbrith found it hard to look at him overlong, lest her own pain cease to be quelled in her breast. She clung tightly to Torfir's hand, more grateful than she could express that her favorite captain and longtime bodyguard had managed to find his way up theAnduin into the city. Then, Faelind's voice rang out clearly through the hall.

"I come today to mark the departure of Melian, daughter of Lord Celebdur ofGondor, a mistress of horses and flowers, who leaves us behind to partake ofEru's gift that only mortal men may know."

And Elbrith saw the pain of Faelind's heart suppressed only lightly under the veneer of his silver surcoat. She silently cursed herself that so many years had been wasted for him and Melian while they performed their duties for the great stone city.

Once the mourners have assembled and paid their respects, a family member leads a simple ceremony marking the departure of the deceased to partake of Eru's gift. Usually, this is the closest male relative—a husband, father, elder brother or perhaps a commanding officer—who begins by recounting the life and death of the deceased. Others who wish to speak briefly on the life of the departed are also welcome to make presentation. It is at this time that noteworthy deeds are mentioned, and though no one is discouraged from displaying their feelings, this is more a time for tales of honor and glory than wailing and misery. Many Gondorians write poetry for such occasions to express their love and respect for the deceased.

INSCRIBING THE "STONE OF LIFE"

Elbrith sat alone in the great library of Celebdur's house in Minas Tirith, surrounded by books and tapestries and carpets. Yet even in this well-insulated room, she could still hear the faint ringing of a hammer as the stonemason tapped out Melian's life onto granite in the workroom, spilling memories of her childhood, her travels, her children and her love with his chisel. The stone of life was to detail all the remarkable events of one's days, yet Elbrith knew that the greatest deeds of Melian would be omitted forever...for what good daughter of the Minas Tirith would admit to saving lives of her enemies and seeking peace in war?

The carving of the stone of life is perhaps the most symbolic part of the Gondorian funeral ritual. For this, the family chooses a master stonemason; his or her task is to inscribe on a large stone (usually granite) the life and times of the departed. The finest carvings include pictures, poetry and even dialogue from the life of the deceased. The stone records all the most important moments the Gondorian experienced. Work on the stone usually begins immediately after death and is completed just before the ceremony of departure. No expense or effort is too great in the making of this stone, and even the poorest Gondorian makes sure funds set are aside for the carving of his or her stone. The symbolism is clear; Gondor is the epitome of an enduring realm, one that stands fast against all hardships. So shall the stone stand fast and ensure that the life of the departed is not forgotten.

THE INTERMENT

A cold wind blew over the hill outside the walls of Minas Tirith. The cloaks of mourners flapped in the wind like frantic gulls as the warder motioned the men carrying Lady Melian's body to lay it to rest in a small tunnel of rock, carved into the very side of the cliff. Elbrith did not shudder in the cold as so many of the others did, but instead stood stock still, her short black hair tangling in the breeze. She remembered another cold night when Melian wore her best gown, but it was an occasion for joy, not sorrow, where she at last clasped the hand of Sir Faelind Edhelion in her own for the plighting of troth.

When all mourners have gathered and the Stone of Life is ready, the embalmers place the dead person in a rock tomb to rest for one night in the open air before the Setting and Reading of the Stone. Poorer families settle for interring their dead in the earth, but if at all possible, burial on a rocky hillside is preferred. The internment involves relatively little ceremony and is a minor event compared to the Ceremony of Departure and the Setting and Reading of the Stone.

THE NIGHT VIGIL

The mourners had departed, save for a lord and lady of the Dúnedain, Faelind gently touched Elbrith's arm. "Are you all right?" She nodded quickly, pulling a hood over her head to obscure her pale face.

"Just thinking of the night ahead, my friend." She pulled the broken hilt of Erelen from a sheath

at her side. "I have nothing to guard her with. My sword is broken, and my honor departed. Perhaps I have no place here."

Faelind shook his head. "As long as you live, you will have honor. And this night, you shall wield her sword." He laid the gleaming blade of Norvegil across Elbrith's knees. "Do not leave my lady alone this dark night, Elbrith. Please." His voice was hoarse. And pulling his brow to her own, Elbrith nodded silently.

Unthinkable though it may be, wild animals and marauding thieves occasionally disturb the bodies of the dead during the night before the Setting and Reading of the Stone. It is customary for a dear friend of the departed or a soldier in service to the family to stand vigil over the body for this night. The family proper never participates in the night vigil, instead taking this evening to rest and prepare for the solemn ceremony of the next day, the Setting and Reading of the Stone. Legends speak of guardians who have sacrificed their own lives to ensure that the body of the deceased is protected at all costs as it rests in its tomb for the first time.

THE SETTING AND READING OF THE STONE

Elbrith had never been wearier in her entire life, but she listened with hope to the singsong voice reading in the dawn light. The stonemason spoke lovingly of a lady he only knew from words carved into dark granite. He spoke of life, not death, of joy rather than sorrow. His voice chanted the litany of a woman who wore many mantles, of lover, mother, warrior and friend. And as he finished, sealing the beautifully engraved stone over the opening to Melian's tomb with molten metals kept warm by his apprentice, Elbrith felt long pent-up tears splash hot on her cheeks, and at last said farewell to the truest friend of her heart.

The Setting and Reading of the Stone completes the Gondorian funeral ritual. This is a time for sorrow to cease and joy to begin, for the events of an individual s lifetime are celebrated forever with this part of the ceremony. The master mason sets the stone into the tomb with some precious metal and reads aloud the words he has carved. Mourners take heart from the accomplishments they hear and know that like Gondor, these memories will last forever in the carved stone.

EPILOGUE

Elbrith sat for a long time on the sea shore, hearing the cries of sailors and gulls mingling a ways down the coast at the edge ofPelargir. If only I could not have failed you, Melian! If only you had not been alone when our enemies struck! If only there was something to have been done! If only....

The seagulls' calls echoed her self-mockery "If only..." they seemed to say.

If only...what? "There was naught that could have saved her, and you did everything and more a friend could ask of a friend. Faelind lives. Their children live. If you wish to serve her still, you may do so through service to them. Get up! You have lost your home, your beloved lord and now your best friend. Yet Faelind and his children have lost even more, for while you are a mere exile, their lady is dead forever. To them, lady of the north! Recall the promise you shared with Melian in the hills of Arthedain when your eldest was less than a day old, more than seventeen summers ago! Remember and fulfill it!"

Elbrith stood then, brushing the sand from her gown. She walked with a quicker pace towards a ship in the harbor that waited to sail to the lands of the north. And a faint smile touched her lips as she picked up two perfectly matched shells for Faelinds twins and a silvery starfish for their noble father, a gift from the sea and beyond.

THOUGHTS ON THE GENEALOGY OF THE NOLDORIN KINGS

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The purpose of this article is to outline some thoughts on the Noldorin royal house—one of the most influential groups in the history of Middle-earth. It should be pointed out to readers that The Silmarillion does not contain the definitive thoughts of Tolkien on the Elder Days. In fact, it would probably be fair to say that he never really completed this work. The Silmarillion is a posthumous publication, compiled by Christopher Tolkien from his father's papers. Much of the other material has since been published in the History of Middle-earth series. These books, along with a number of ICE products, have been used to gain material for this article.

It is stated in *Morgoth's Ring* (238) that Finwë had one son by his first wife Míriel (Fëanor) and two sons and three daughters by his second wife Indis.

These daughters have never figured in the histories of Middle-earth, and it is not documented who their descendants (if any) were and what part they played in the War of the Jewels. I will comment on these later.

It is clear from Tolkien's works that the House of Fëanor consisted of his seven sons and at least one grandchild. It is not inconceivable that there were other descendants. ICE have created a nephew for Celebrimbor! Finculin (thereby implying that Curufin had at least one more child). Celebrimbor seems to have been born in Beleriand, having lived in Nargothrond before its fall, and remained there even after his father s departure. Curufin was apparently among the cruelest of Fëanor's descendants. This may imply that he had an unfortunate character. Celegorm and Caranthir seem to have had equally unfortunate dispositions (their names meaning, respectively, "The Crafty" and "The Dark").

It is noted in *Morgoth's Ring* (210) that the natural state of affairs for Elves was to marry while fairly young. Fëanor's other four sons seem to have been much more personable and inherited less of their father's darker side. It is interesting that no other descendants of Fëanor are mentioned in *The Silmarillion* as having sworn the oath, but this may simply be that they were not fated to play significant roles within the war against Morgoth. Fëanor seems to have married fairly quickly after reaching his majority (50 Valian years). There was apparently a fairly short time between the wedding and the first childbirth, with a longer period between the first and second (MR: 212). Given that Fëanor had the largest number of children recorded among the Eldar, it is probably safe to believe that a few of these were born fairly soon after his marriage.

If I assume that Fëanor married in his 60th year and had his first child (Maedhros) after 5 years, then there would be approximately 251 Valian years left until his exile from Valinor. This would be ample time for the elder two of Fëanor's sons (by all accounts, the better among them) to marry and have children. Given the fact that marriage was a natural condition for Elves, this does not seem an unreasonable proposition, especially since the other younger grandsons of Finwë had begun to have children, at least towards the end of the time in Valinor (e.g., Turgon and possibly Orodreth).

It is quite probable that any other descendants of Fëanor would have suffered heavy losses during the war against Morgoth. An indication of this may be found in the course of events surrounding the founding of Eregion. Initially these Noldorin Elves were led by Galadriel and Celeborn. The rule of Eregion was subsequently usurped by Celebrimbor. I would contend that this may meant that a majority of the Noldor had been followers of Fëanor—those of Fingolfin's and Finrod's followers may have chosen to remain in Lindon with the high king, Gil-galad. There may have been sufficient tension remaining among the Noldor (following the assault on the mouths of Sirion and in spite the pardon of the Valar) to cause Galadriel to lead away many followers of Fëanor. If a senior member of the House of Fëanor remained with the Noldor of Eregion, they surely would have claimed seniority over Celebrimbor. Furthermore, given the taint upon their house, any descendent of Fëanor might be particularly reluctant to return to Valinor to face those who suffered on account of their actions. (This would also apply to those who followed Fëanor.)

The descendants of Fingolfin were the high kings in exile. Ereinion (Gil-galad), born eighteen years before his death, may not have been Fingon's only child but does appear to have been his only son. Any elder daughter would appear to have perished in the wars, chosen not to journey to Beleriand (unlikely) or accepted the pardon of the Valar. The same could be said of any younger children. Turgons only child was his daughter Idril. His wife perished in the journey across the Helcaraxë, and it is stated that he had no other children (WotJ: 323). Aredhel had only one child, Maeglin, and he perished during the fall of Gondolin. Aredhel is elsewhere referred to as the eldest daughter of Fingolfin, but no other children of Fingolfin are mentioned. It is stated that Galadriel could have claimed the high kingship of the Noldor after the fall of Gil-galad, thus implying that no other descendants of Fingolfin remained.

The descendants of Finarfin became known as the House of Finrod while in exile. Finrod never produced any children (Sil: 156); his beloved, Amárië of the Vanyar, did not go into exile. Orodreth is listed as the second son of Finarfin, but it is mentioned by Christopher Tolkien that his father was not clear whether Orodreth should be moved to the next generation of the same house. (I have not seen any such comment, and so cannot pursue this further.) Orodreth had at least one child, a daughter Finduilas, although she may not have been his only child. In The *Shaping of Middle-earth* (213, 312, 323), Tolkien lists

Orodreth as having had two sons: Ordhelm and Ordlaf (213). In another version, only a single son is named: Halmir, who was "hung to a tree by Orcs" (312; note 49). It may be that the option of two sons was eventually rejected in favor of a daughter, Finduilas, who came to assume Halmir's fate.

Angrod and Aegnor are given fairly limited attention in *The Silmarillion* and other writings. ICE's Arnor modules detail Ellindiel Orgalad as a granddaughter of Angrod, and his only remaining descendent (in Middle-earth at least). Aegnor was enamored not of an Elf, but of Andreth, a woman of the House of Bëor (MR: 323-324). He chose not to pursue this love and so had no children. Celebrían is the only recorded offspring of Galadriel, though Amroth of Lórien was initially considered (but rejected) as her son.

The fact that Galadriel could have claimed the rule of the Noldor but chose not to would seem to preclude further descendants of the other members of the House of Finrod. However, the method of succession may not have been straightforward. Fingon, for instance, was succeeded by his brother Turgon— not by Gil-galad, his son. (This may have been because Gilgalad had not reached his majority; yet Gilgalad would surely have been a suitable choice as king, since he would have been able to coordinate military campaigns and rally his people in a way that Turgon could not.) Thus, if the succession passed to the eldest member of the house, it would not be impossible for Orodreth to have had surviving children who remained in Middle-earth.

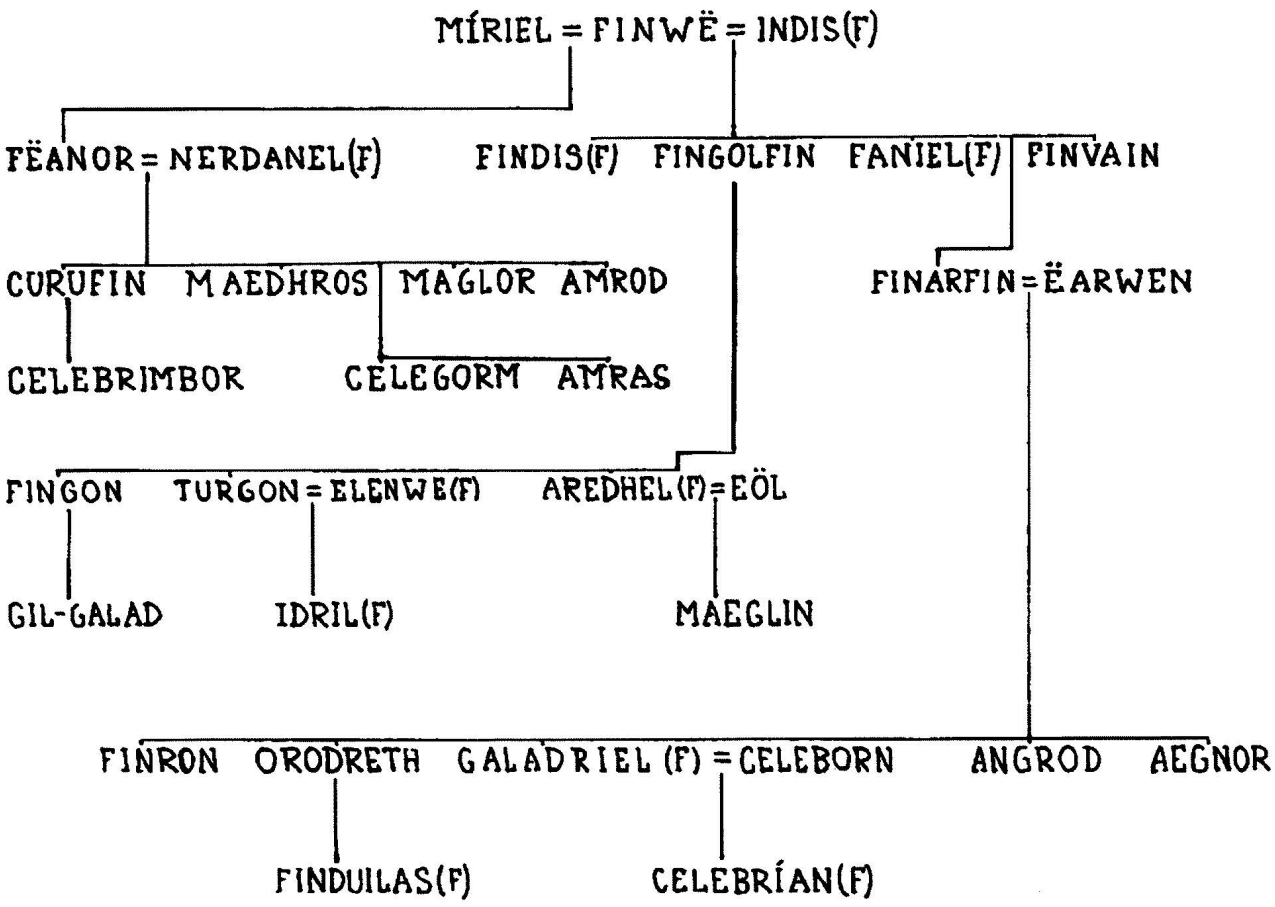
I am particularly fond of this idea because of the existence of Glorfindel, described as "one of the mighty of the Firstborn....an Elf-lord of a house of princes (LotR I: 235);" and of Gildor, a Noldo of Imladris who addresses himself as "Gildor Inglorion of the House of Finrod *(ibid.* 89)." Finarfin's birth name was Ingalaure, since he shared the golden hair of his mother, which continued with his descendants. The implication is that Glorfindel was a descendant of Finarfin. It would seem that Glorfindel, if not Gildor also, were scions of Orodreth or Angrod.

The use of the term "House" is the only possible point of contention, since it may refer to a direct descendent or a close follower. I would suggest it refers to a direct descendent, since Tolkien states that "their families, or houses, were held together by love and a deep feeling for kinship in mind and body (MR: 210)." This would imply that "House" may refer to a tie of blood. However, in *The Silmarillion,* Voronwë son of Aranwë describes himself as a member of the house of Fingolfin. Assuming he is not descended from Finarfin, the term may perhaps be used for both purposes. Another possibility would be that individuals descended from Finwë's daughters attached themselves to the houses of Finwë's two sons. The House of Fingolfin should probably command the loyalty of anyone not descended from Finarfin, since this became the line of kings in exile. Descendants of the three daughters would surely be considered princes and princesses, thus it is not inconceivable for Voronwë, Gildor and Glorfindel were descended from Finwë's daughters, thus attaching themselves to the lines of Fingolfin and Finarfin. Of Finwë's daughters, it is possible that Finvain accompanied the exiles to Middle-earth (MR: 265).

I turn now to Noldorin characters generated for the MERP series. As mentioned earlier, Celebrimbor was considered to have a nephew, Finculin. It is suggested that Finculin had relatives in the House of Finrod (which, as I have pointed out, is quite possible). Also in the *Lórien* module, two members of the House of Fingolfin are listed: Danil and Daniros. It should be obvious that these cannot be descended from Fingolfin, but again they may be related to his sisters. Some of the characters from the *Court of Ardor* module are also stated as being of the House of Finrod: Cambragol and the twin Fëaturi.

Chrys and Laurrë Menelrana are detailed as being of the line of Finrod. I would interpret this to mean they are direct descendants of Finrod. Based on my previous discussion, I would argue that this is not possible.

One thing I am rather surprised about is that Gil-galad perished without issue. Given the fact that he lived in Middle-earth for over 3,500 years, it would seem rather unusual that he had no queen or children. However, it is mentioned in *Morgoth's Ring* (210) that Elves marry only once (Finwë being an exception) and that spouses were chosen fairly early in life. Obviously, the nature of the exile could seriously affect this ideal situation. The period after the defeat of Morgoth allowed those who wearied of Middle-earth to return to Valinor. It would mean that those who were betrothed or married could find themselves separated. The Eldar, as the Númenóreans after them, would not bring forth children if there was the possibility of separation. It is possible that Gil-galad may indeed have had a wife and children. Their fate may have been to journey over the sea before the end of the Second Age, or the king's children may have perished in the war against Sauron (although an event this important would surely have warranted some sort of comment).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CURUFIN
MAEDHROS
MAGLOR
AMROD
FINARFIN = ËARWEN
CELEBRIMBOR
CELEGORM
AMRAS
FINGON
TURGON = ELENWE(F)
AREDHEL(F) = EÖL
GIL-GALAD
IDRIL(F)
MAEGLIN
FINRON
ORODRETH
GALADRIEL (F) = CELEBORN
ANGROD
AEGNOR
FINDUILAS(F)
CELEBRÍAN(F)

Rastarin's Log

Bridget Buxton: Balibogach, Balmur Swamps, Lebennin,SG3 ME1 (nequ36a@prodigy.com)

"There is a running joke among the mariners of Pelargir that the Dread Pirate Rastarin must surely be of royal blood, given the fact that she has plied the waters of Belfalas Bay for nearly two centuries. The truth of the matter, your majesty, is that Rastarin is not one person but many. The original bearer of that name was indeed a woman of low birth, a commoner from war-torn Cardolan we are told. There are others who could better recount the tale of her rise to prominence (or infamy) during the Usurper's reign, but in the sequel she managed to perpetuate her reputation bypassing on her name and role to a successor. This piratical tradition has continued down to this very day; and if Rastarin has been a thorn in your side, my king, do not forget that her depredations against the Corsairs have been greater."

—Daeron, Steward of Gondor, to King Tarondor

CHAPTER TWO: IT'S QUITE POSSIBLE THAT THIS LIBRARY IS NOT ENTIRELY STABLE...

The next morning Rastarin leads the party to the ruins of Osgiliath, 20,000 minas richer, where the TCBS is waiting to take them back to Pelargir. On the way they hear disturbing news: a strange earthquake has struck Pelargir. The Hall of the Faithful has been severely damaged, and the Lord Captain Elinarion injured. Rumours abound that this is a sign of divine displeasure with the current regime, and few are surprised when the neighboring town of Hyarpendë, on the eastern bank of the Anduin opposite Pelargir, opens its gates to Sangahyandion without a fight. Pelargir is now under siege. Caldir takes the TCBS to a secret cove while the rest enter the city on foot, Rastarin still in disguise. There they learn that only Elinarion and a scribe were able to escape the Hall before the entrance collapsed, but that Elinarion's mind has been completely blasted by some powerful magic. Lytta is unable to heal him or learn anything from him. The defence of the city is now being organised—competently but without much inspiration—by one lieutenant Beleg, son of Belthun.

"Not...not the Belthun who used to run a privateer ship out of Dol Amroth?" asks Rastarin (*in cognito*).

"Yes. Or did—until he was cruelly slain by that cursed pirate, Rastarin!" says Beleg, anger for once overcoming his stern military demeanour. "I shall never rest until I hunt down that treacherous bitch. She gouged out his eyes with a spoon!"

"She has been known to do that on occasion," the disguised Rastarin replies.

Beleg gives Daeron and Lytta directions to the house of the surviving scribe, while the rest proceed to the Halls, which lie under a tower on an island in the harbour. Rassimus' brother Tarassis is leading the excavation, but it will not be possible to force an entrance down to the library for several hours. They decide to rejoin Daeron and Lytta, who are just approaching the scribe's house when it is engulfed in a huge fireball. The sulphurous smell of the flames proves beyond doubt that this explosion was caused by *naurnen.* All run to help quench the flames, or—more specifically—to prevent them from spreading to the nearby Frothing Hog (the best beer in Pelargir). Two unrecognisably charred bodies are found in the wreckage, and on one of them Clennan discovers a small pendant of a karma, a Númenórean helmet. The Hall of the Faithful once contained the Karma of Aldarion that warded them against evil, but it was stolen long ago. After questioning witnesses, they conclude that whoever caused the explosion must have immolated themselves as well, either by accident or on purpose. But who would have been so determined that the scribe's knowledge should remain secret that he would sacrifice his own life?

"Surely not any servant of Sangahyandion," says Daeron. "A Dúnadan of his nobility and lineage would never knowingly condone any plot to damage the Hall of the Faithful."

"The Brotherhood of the Mountain Path," says Lytta grimly.

Kalin, Rastarin, Rassimus, Lytta, Clennan and Daeron resolve to enter the Hall to discover the truth, and arrive on the island just as Tarassis and his men succeed in clearing an entrance. The way down is treacherous, for the stairway that leads under the tower has collapsed in many places, but they make it down to the main chambers safely. The stone of the great library is groaning as if unable to support its own weight, and the faint sound of trickling water echoes ominously through the cavernous halls; in places it is already knee deep. They notice immediately the signs of a struggle that could not have been caused by the earthquake: there is blood on the walls and overturned tables, but no bodies. And where are the rest of the scribes who were working here when the quake struck?

Kalin leads the party to investigate, following the path of his vision down through the lower levels until they come to the well of Ulmo.

There they discover a wooden box containing two scrolls. One tells the story of the Elendilmir and how it was eventually hidden by Elendil's command in the Hallow of Imrazôr where the Oiolairë tree stands on Tolfalas. The other is a strange scroll: the 'Berúthiel scroll' as they call it, for it tells the true story of that unfortunate queen, whose name was changed from Berethiel to mean 'woman of malice'. In truth, the woman who married King Tarannon Falastur was not 'Berethiel' at all, but Ancalimë, foster-daughter of Fuinur, the ancient Black Númenórean Lord of Far and Near Harad, and worshipper of Melkor. Her elevation to the throne was part of a mysterious plot by Melkor's prophet, Zimrakhil, to merge the lines of Elendil and the failing race of the Black Númenóreans.

According to the history books, no child was born from the ill-fated union of Tarannon and Berúthiel, but the scroll tells a different story. There was a child, but at the Queen's request it was hidden by the Steward Gundor, lest the evil purpose intended for it should be fulfilled. That child became the ancestor of the royal house of Morthond, one of whose scions wrote a brief note at the end: "Now at last I know

the secret of who I am." The note is signed Neithan, Prince Orodreth of Morthond, and the cursed murderer of King Eldacar's son who fled to Umbar and disappeared after the kin-strife (who happens to be uncle to Kalin and Rastarin). The scroll also speaks of the infamous cats of queen Berúthiel, whom she controlled by means of a red stone given to her by Fuinur.

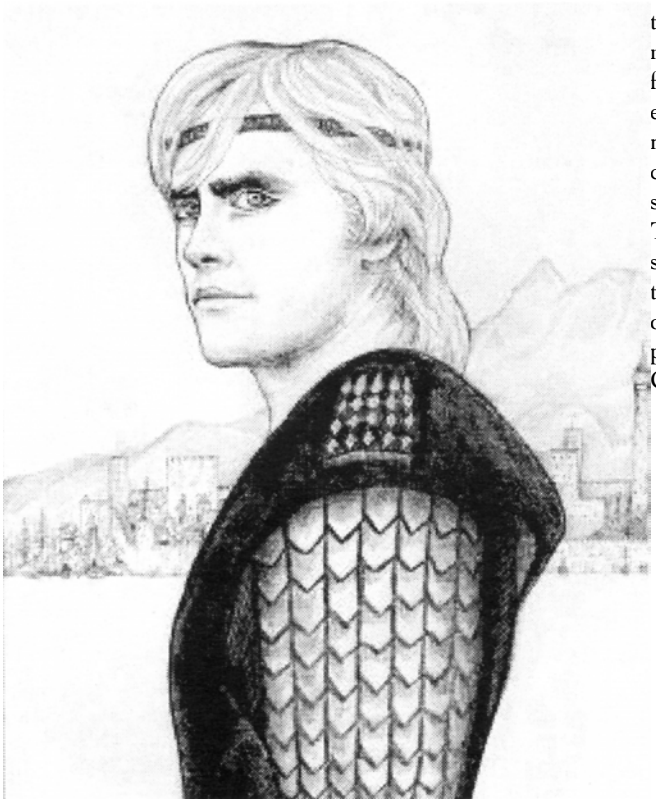
Although intrigued by the implications of these revelations, the party continues to search the dark lower passageways of the library to discover the fate of the scribes. Suddenly, across a hallway, they are confronted by a shadowy figure of a man who flees when they call to him. Running around the corner of a corridor, they see the figure again—standing, almost as if he had been waiting for them, but again he flees. Kalin continues to pursue, as the man leads them further and deeper into the maze of dark passageways.

"Wait, Kalin, I don't like this," says Rastarin, stopping at last.

"It does seem rather like a trail of peanuts leading into an open mouth, agrees Lytta. Rastarin reaches into her cloak and pulls out Grimbold, the ship's rat of the TCBS, and places him in the water, where he begins paddling around madly and squeaking. "Danger, Grimbold? Which way?" she asks.

"So THAT was what nibbled holes in my hose on your infested ship!" says Kalin. Grimbold squeaks madly, and a moment later shadowy forms—men of the Brotherhood—fall upon them from all sides. Within a few minutes the assailants are reduced to a heap of quivering body parts, and Rastarin and Kalin complement each other on their swordplay. Lytta performs her ritual and questions one of the dead, who seems to be under the same malevolent influence that blasted the mind of the Lord Captain. He is not acting of his own free will, but in the service of one called 'Irusan,' an evil undead spirit of great power. In a further hall they discover more of the Brotherhood, who appear to be conducting an evil ritual with the bodies of the dead scribes—everything in sight is splattered with blood. Kalin leads the attack, but the Brotherhood is not interested in fighting. They laugh and curse as they slit their own throats, and suddenly—as if in response—there is a thunderous crashing as the Hall begins to collapse, just as in Kalin's vision.

"I have a bad feeling about this," says Clennan. But there is still time to investigate what the Brotherhood was gloating over. It is an evil stone, the so-called 'Star of Gobha' in which the souls of those enslaved by Irusan are entrapped. What the Brotherhood intended to do with it is a mystery, but Lytta decides she must take it to Morthec, the undead king of the Oathbreakers, for safekeeping. Careful not to touch its steaming surface, she places it in the box that contained the scrolls, and the party make haste to escape the flooding library. This they eventually manage, after a number of hair-raising escapes, by swimming up some ventilation shafts. Tarassis is pleased and somewhat surprised to see them back on the surface once more, and he accompanies them to the Lord Captain's house.



There Daeron discovers secret writing on on of the scrolls, revealing that the Elendilmir is to be found in the tomb of Edhelion, and Rastarin decides to set out at once to obtain it. Possession of such an item, she realises, would be invaluable in restoring confidence in Tarondor and reinforcing his claim to be the 'true king', as opposed to Sangahyandion's claim to be of higher and more rightful lineage. Kalin, however, is reluctant to plunder the tombs of his ancestors and instead promises to meet them at Dol Amroth on the way to Morthec and Morthond. Daeron says he must stay to help with the defence of Pelargir, but Rassimus and Lytta agree to accompany Rastarin and Clennan to Tolfalas.

The secret of *naurnen* is nowhere to be found in the Lord Captain's house, but to Rastarin's pyromaniacal delight they do discover twelve bottles of the stuff in a safe that is unlocked by Clennan's karma-pendant. There remains only one other place that the formula might be hidden: in Morthond itself. Rastarin therefore promises to accompany Kalin back to her homeland when the Elendilmir is recovered. Tarassis listens with interest to all these plans, but says he prefers to stay in Pelargir and build ships for Tarondor rather than accompany his brother to Tolfalas.

Later that day an emissary of Sangahyandion arrives, his younger brother Arkhad, bearing terms for Daeron. "My brother and I are greatly disturbed by reports of what has happened to the Hall of the Faithful," Arkhad begins, but his manner is aloof and haughty rather than sympathetic.

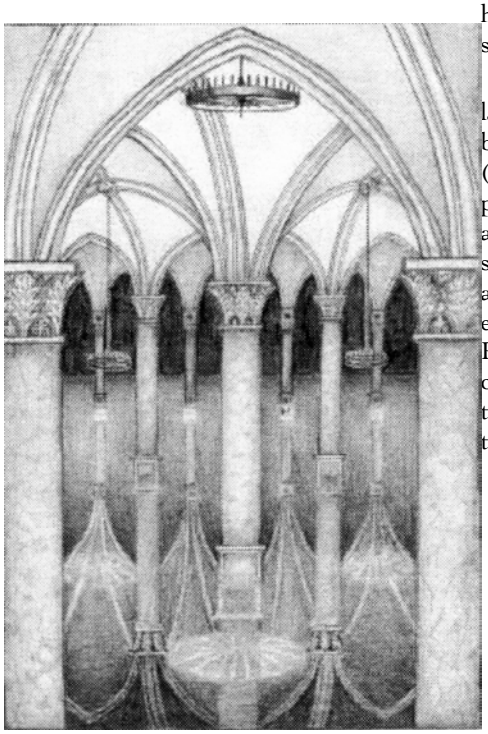
"Yes, yes, well, get on with it, Arkhad," replies Daeron wearily, and goes through the motions of hearing Sangahyandion's ultimatum and diplomatically rejecting it. Afterwards the party spends the evening at the Frothing Hog, but even the antics of Burly Bob (the 'dancing slob') cannot alleviate the grim mood that now pervades the beleaguered city. The next day Rastarin, Clennan, Rassimus and Lytta set out for the TCBS while Kalin prepares to depart for Dol Amroth.

With the TCBS still disguised as a coastal trader, Rastarin drops in to her secret base at Balibogach and takes on a trusty crew of twenty-three, four expert archers, and (of course) plenty of scrumpy. The journey to Tolfalas is uneventful, although they sight a scout ship of the Pirates of the Red Cliffs that flees down the western side of the island. Rastarin and Clennan recognise the colours of their old enemy Gedron Moonstone, better known as the 'Laughing Reaver,' but decide not to give chase. They make for the harbour of Caras Tolfalas, where their old friend Captain Dunsul is holding the fort. The evening is spent exchanging news and making merry at the Albatross Inn, and reminiscing over the good old days of plunder and piracy. Rassimus asks Dunsul for news of the fleet at Dol Amroth.

"Pelargir won't get any help from that quarter, I'm afraid," Dunsul replies.

"Prince Celdrahil is still blockaded by the Corsair fleet and Pirates of the Red Cliffs under Captain Hardon, and his fifty ships can't even leave the harbour."

"I've got a bone to pick with Captain Hardon," Rastarin scowls. "Ever since the original Rastarin took the Ethir trade from the Red Cliff pirates during the Kin-strife, there has been enmity between the captains of the TCBS and the Black Serpent. And ever since Hardon murdered my mentor, the sixth pirate Rastarin, I have carried this spoon in anticipation of the day when I shall have my revenge! But first we have business to attend to at the Hallow of Imrazôr."



Dunsul looks alarmed. "You can't seriously be thinking of plundering the royal tombs!"

"Of course not," says Rastarin, producing Tarondor's letter of marque. "I am no longer officially engaged in plundering. I suppose we shall have to call it something else."

But the expedition to the Hallow is unfruitful (except for Clennan, who pockets a few valuable trinkets while no one is looking). For the tomb of Edhelion was plundered during the Great Raid on Pelargir, and the stonework used to re-seal it by the Prince of Belfalas is only a few years old. Rastarin is furious. "Daeron must have known of this all along, and yet he said nothing!"

"Once a traitor, always a traitor," says Rassimus. "I knew we should have let him drown in the Hall of the Faithful."

The party leaves Edhelion's tomb in disgust, resolved to seek further information about the plundering of the Hallow from Prince Celdrahil at Dol Amroth. Darkness falls as they begin retrace their path back over the rocky highlands of central Tolfalas, and a strange drumming is heard in the distance. Squat stone figures now loom on either side of the road, their deep-set eyes glinting faintly. In an effort to skirt these strange monoliths, the travellers soon become hopelessly lost and reach a dead end.

There they are met by an old blind Drûg, Fanghîn, the living image of the stone sentinels whose eyes he uses for sight. Persuaded that Fanghîn means them no harm, the party consumes several gallons of scrumpy and spend the night in his cave.

During their sleep, they all have a similar dream; a vision apparently brought on by Fanghîn's tea. A Corsair, whose name (they later learn) is Duranil, sacrilegiously plunders Imrazôr's Hallow with his men and discovers the Elendilmir. In the next scene, however, he appears shipwrecked on a barren shore. Heading inland, Duranil encounters a band of warriors from the Ruadh clan (Lytta's people from the village of Slaem Caradog) who slay him and his two companions and take the Elendilmir, thus completing Uinen's vengeance.

Now more than ever the adventurers are eager to accompany Lytta back to her village, and by the next evening the TCBS is prepared to depart. Dunsul wishes them good luck, but bids them be cautious when approaching Dol Amroth.

"Captain Hardon's a dangerous man to have behind you, in a tavern as much as in a fight," he says meaningfully.

The two hundred vessels of the Corsair armada blockading Dol Amroth are indeed a daunting sight, and the TCBS drops sail while the pirates consider their next move.

"You're not seriously thinking of sailing INTO a corsair fleet?" gasps Lytta.

"When one is faced with this sort of problem," Rastarin says philosophically, "the best thing one can do is have good shot of scrumpy. I find it really clears my thoughts."

"In a mallet sort of way," mutters Clennan under his breath—but he and Rassimus do not require much persuasion to join captain and crew in a drunken party while the TCBS wallows sluggishly in the waves. Soon various vessels start to overtake them, merchant ships supplying the Corsair fleet, although the drunken barfing company of the TCBS (now masquerading as a beer tanker) is left in peace. But one of Hardon's small scout ships is not so easily put off. Captain Ramrod demands to sample some of the cargo, and Rastarin readily agrees. A crate of scrumpy (liberally spiked with one of Lytta's herbal poisons) is duly handed over, and within half an hour Ramrod's ship is drifting aimlessly towards the coast of Anfalas. "What did I tell you?" Rastarin laughs.

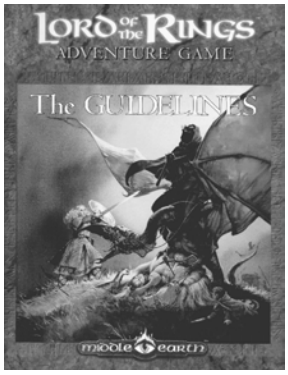
The TCBS retreats to a hidden cove under the command of the helmsman Caldir while the adventurers board Ramrod's ship with a skeleton crew. The bodies of the dead Corsairs are stripped and cast overboard, except for Ramrod's head, which Rastarin relieves of its eyeballs by means of her spoon. They sail through under the very noses of the Corsairs and preposterously erect prow of the Black Serpent, finding shelter at last in the delta of the river Morthond. Their next destination! Dol Amroth, Castle of the Prince...

Product Review

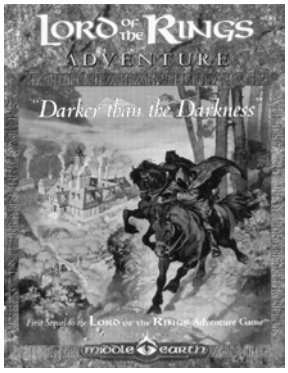
Jessica M. Ney and S. Coleman

Lord of the Rings Adventure Game

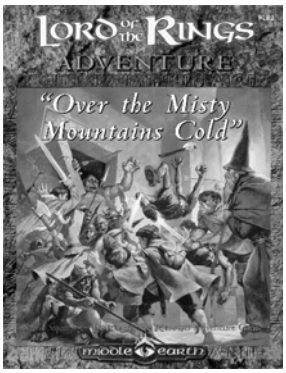
(#LRØ) Charlottesville, Virginia Iron Crown Enterprises, 1997 [154 pgs.+accessories; $18.00]



Margaret and Dan Henley *"Darker than the Darkness"* /Matthias and Karen Birkner *"Bad Men, Full o' Thievery"* (# LR1) Charlottesville, Virginia Iron Crown Enterprises, 1991 [96 pgs; $12.00]



Jessica M. Ney-Grimm *"Over the Misty Mountains Cold"* (# LR2) Charlottesville, Virginia: Iron Crown Enterprises, 1993 [80 pgs; $10.00]



Jon and Rebecca Whitney *"Before the Goblins"* (# LR3) Charlottesville,Virginia: Iron Crown Enterprises, [in preparation]

Deborah Sue Curtis *"Greatest of the Forests"* (# LR4) Charlottesville, Virginia Iron Crown Enterprises, [in preparation]

What is the *Lord of the Rings Adventure Game* (LOR)? Upon cursory examination, a seasoned MERP player might well dismiss the venture as an attempt on ICE's part to create a Middle-earth equivalent to "Basic D&D." And so it may indeed be characterized—to a degree. LOR does offer a vastly simplified version of MERP/RMSS game mechanics in a 32-page "Guidelines" book included within the boxed set referred to above (# LRØ). Yet it would be misleading to appraise this series simply on the basis of its intentionally rudimentary system concepts.

In fact, the centerpiece of LOR and its follow-up products is not a rule system, but rather an engaging, tightly conceived and extremely well-written mini-campaign, set in Eriador and Rhovanion just prior to the outbreak of the War of the Ring (sometime between T.A. 3009 and 3017). A series of six, interlocking scenarios provides plot and setting for a band of adventurers who, in the course of their travels, get numerous opportunities to cross paths with some of J. R.R. Tolkien's most memorable characters! Gandalf, Aragorn, Barliman Butterbur, Bilbo Baggins, Merry and Pippin (and, in the forthcoming releases, Radagast, Galadriel and Celeborn). In a word, LOR enables its players to experience and explore the world they know and love from the pages of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* in a way that the MERP series (with its mid-Third Age setting) does not.

Before describing this adventure campaign in greater detail, however, a few things need to be said about the game mechanics aspect of the series. While I am not familiar with other introductory rule systems currently available on the market with which it might be compared, I can affirm that LOR is very well-suited to initiating the novice into the world of fantasy role playing—and not only for players; LOR is equally devoted to instruction in the art of gamemastering. Perhaps the greatest strength of LOR on this count is that it teaches you while you play. Yes, there is the guidebook which lays everything out in theory; but the real emphasis is on introducing players and GMs to rule concepts and procedures in the adventure scenarios themselves. Boxed texts regularly interrupt the course of the adventure's narrative to explain (or remind) the GM how the scene at hand may be handled—what dice rolls to make, how to determine results, the se-

quence in which to conduct a combat, etc. This mode of presentation encourages fledgling GMs to judge the applicability of rules according to context and common sense, rather than by abstract principles.

Naturally, this method of rule-teaching can only take place within a "controlled gaming environment," in which the options for PC action are fairly circumscribed and plots proceed in a more or less linear fashion. At a few junctures in the storyline, this inevitable funneling of the action struck me as unnecessarily heavy-handed—but only in a few places; for the most part, the anticipated flow of events offered enough options to preserve player initiative and freedom. The plot-line of LOR works, in part, because it is specifically designed to tell the story of PCs that have been pre-generated for it (though it would not be too difficult for a reasonably competent GM to adapt the campaign to most any party of beginning characters).

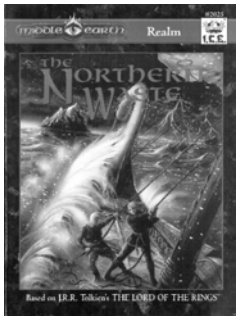
The pre-generated characters are, in fact, one of the most enjoyable facets of LOR. These six personalities—two Hobbits, a Dwarf, an Elf, a Half-elf and a Beorning (three males, three females) —are endowed with a rich backdrop of motive, biography and prior inter-relationships that both endears them to the players and immediately draws them into the plot of the adventure. The PC bios (written up as individual stories that can be handed out to the players) ground the characters not only in the action of the initial scenario; they also lay a deeper foundation for involving the characters in events of the more distant adventures. It is, in fact, the PCs and their stories that serve as the ultimate linking factor between the first three scenarios and the second (referred to as two "trilogies"). All this makes for a highly integrated campaign that moves from one episode to the next like clockwork, without seeming overbearing or implausible.

Drawing heavily upon themes, motifs and episodes from *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, their adventure leads the PCs across the well-trodden landscape of Bilbo's and Frodo's travels—from Bree through the Barrow-downs and Rhudaur to Rivendell, and thence "over the Misty Mountains cold" into Beorning country, the borders of Lórien, and finally into the depths of Mirkwood, "greatest of the forests." In the course of this six-part trek, they encounter Trolls, Barrow-wights, ruffians, Elves, Goblins, Beornings and other denizens of Middle-earth bearing the trademark of Tolkien's imagination. While the experienced MERP player might find this constant recapitulation of elements from the books less than original at times, it must always be kept in mind that this campaign is primarily written for people who have never role played, but may have read Tolkien—in attempting to comprehend a complex and probably somewhat alien concept like FRP, imagine how reassuring it would be to explore that concept through a familiar setting like the one LOR offers. It also serves to fulfill one very basic and deep-seated desire that role playing makes possible: to experience the world of Tolkien's books as we have experienced it through The *Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit*.

The bottom line is that, on the whole, LOR admirably accomplishes what it sets out to do. Episodes 2 and 3 (*"Darker than the Darkness"* and *"Bad Men, Full o' Thievery"*) do not quite attain the flawless Tolkienian atmosphere or prose-style of Episode 1 (*"Dawn Comes Early"*) and, with Episode 4, they manifest a few discrepancies with Tolkien's mythology, but these remain minor and do not mar the overall impact. It is to be hoped that the two remaining episodes (now under construction and hopefully to be released within the next year) will deliver a worthy climax to this series.

Reviewer: Chris Seeman

Randy Maxwell



"The Northern Waste" (#2025)
Charlottesville, Virginia
Iron Crown Enterprises, 1997
[192pp; $28.00]

The Northern Waste is one of the first products since ICE's revamping of its MERP line to consist entirely of new material. The book's subject will be familiar to most readers as the region called 'Forodwaith' on Christopher Tolkien's map. The book maps and details a region including the Ice-bay and a rugged peninsula and archipelago beyond: the remnants of the Iron Mountains.

Thankfully, in the sensibility of this reviewer, the Iron Prison is relegated to the ocean; the Waste, however, contains many remnants of the Black Enemy's rule.

A casual glance at the map included (a fine color representation by Karin and Christian Bohr) shows that the book covers a region far in excess of any previous ICE book, and even allowing for the distortion from the curve of Arda, dwarfs the Arnor maps. Even so, it does not fully map the region covered by the book; the home of the Snow-elves lies off the map some distance to the north. The verso of the map is a supplement to the Middle-earth Collectible Card Game, providing new locations from those detailed for table-top gaming. The general pattern of the book's contents parallels earlier works: it provides sections on culture, language, natural history and, of course, one of the innovations of the newer MERP material: a travelers guide.

The focus of The Northern Waste is eclectic, as is natural for such scope, but it contains excellent cultural and historical material. The Lossoth are further detailed as three tribes: the Lumimiehet [Snow-men], Jäämiehet [Ice-men] and Merimetsästäjät [Sea-hunters] . The culture detailed is perhaps best described as a cross between the Inuit and the Finno-Urgic folk of northern Russia and Scandinavia. The language developed for these people is translated by Finnish. Since Tolkien so admired the Finnish tongue and its legends, collectively the Kalevala, this seems appropriate. Other folk described are Elves, including a small haven of High Elves and a larger community of Snow-elves (a Nandorin offshoot), Umli, Berninga (Beorn's folk), Urdor (the folk of Hoarmûrath the Ringwraith), Orcs and other monsters. The ruins of Angband contain many deadly creatures, and the hunters of Angmar scour the tundra...

But the most immediate threat to any characters traveling here is the weather and barren conditions. These hazards are described and the gamemaster is given systems to help deal with their effects. With friendly camps and settlements so far apart, the climate alone may prove to an unprepared party the deadliest aspect of their journey. Indeed the first of the two adventures included tells the tale of an ill-fated expedition and the discovery of its treasures. The other is intended for natives, and concerns a desperate quest to avert the Witch-king's dire sorceries (which I will leave undescribed to be discovered by the gamemaster and players).

Sites and NPCs are relatively limited in detail; this probably reflects the nomadic character of the majority of the populace and the constraints of space. But it does lay at the gamemaster's feet the work needed make them come alive. With so much gametime expended to reach them, the players probably expect virtuoso descriptions, and the company of detailed strangers after lonely wandering. The individual site descriptions include Helloth (the Snow-elven citadel at the North Pole), Evermist (a Noldorin haven dedicated to purging Morgoth's taint from Forodwaith), a Númenórean ruin, the volcano called Morgoth's Well, an iceberg settlement and a tomb of a Dúnadan prince.

I have too little technical and scientific knowledge to evaluate the iceberg dwelling, but it seemed difficult to swallow, given the effort needed to make it habitable. Unlike an igloo, the carving would be time-consuming and probably would perish as the iceberg floated south into warmer seas or crumbled in summer. One area that might have done for more description would be the spring thaw, as this would have significant impact on all areas of Northern life. But this criticism is not a serious one.

The introduction of the Snow-elves was a surprise initially, but it does reflect traditions and fiction from Europe and elsewhere: Hyperborea, Beyond the North Wind [Macdonald], the castle of the Ice-queen. Their home is probably too remote for even the most sturdy of travellers, so their presence in the Waste is mostly a matter of glimpses of bands and traders.

All in all, the book is satisfying and cannot but help to inspire the gamemaster. My own reaction was to immediately consider these possibilities, and since, like many campaigns, mine is set in Eriador, this opened up new vistas in an accessible region. The student of Tolkien should realize that the work was constructed out of a foundation of few clues indeed; but the quality of the research means that it meshes well with both MERP and the canon. My major caveat to gamers is that the region is both deadly and huge, and that low-level adventurers not native to these parts should stay away. A weak party of Lossoth, Umli or Snow-elves could be interesting, but the gamemaster is hampered by the fact that only two adventures are included and most sites are too dangerous and safe places too rare.

The Northern Waste compares favorably with many other 1st editions of MERP regions. One hopes that the region will not be ignored in the future, regulated (like certain parts of Endor) to a lack of support and cross-reference in other releases. Certainly Other Hands can do its part to further develop the Waste. I encourage every reader who games in Middle-earth to take a look.

Reviewer: Jeff Erwin

He chanted a song of wizardry,
Of percing, opening, of treachery,
revealing, uncovering, betraying.
Then suddenly Felagund there swaying
sang in answer a song of staying,
resisting, battling against power,
Of secrets kept, strength like a tower,
and trust unbroken, freedom, escape;
Of changing and of shifting shape;
Of snares eluded, broken traps,
The prison opening, the chain that snaps.

Backwards and forwards swayed their song.
Reeling and foundering, as ever more strong
The chanting swelled. Felagund fought,
And all the magic and might he brought
Of Elvenesse into his words.
Softly in the gloom they heard the birds
Singing afar in Nargothrond,
The sighing of the Sea beyond,
Beyond the Western World, on sand,
On sand of pearls in Elvenland.

Then in the gloom gathered; darkness growing
In Valinor, the red blood flowing
Beside the Sea, where the Noldor slew
The Foamriders, and stealing drew
Their white ships with their white sails
From lamplit heavens. The wind wails,
The wolf howls. The ravens flee.
The ice mutters in the mouths of the Sea.
The captives sad in Angband mourn.
Thunder rumbles, the fires burn,
And Finrod fell before the throne.
The Silmarillion, p. 171